

MALLEVILLE-LES-GRÈS CHURCHYARD

Index No. Fr. 662

Malleville-les-Grès is a village and commune 41 kilometres west of Dieppe and 10 kilometres south-west of St. Valéry-en-Caux. It lies 2 kilometres south of Vieuxvieux, which is a seaside village 9 kilometres west of St. Valéry-en-Caux on the G.C.118T road running south from Vieuxvieux.

South-west of the church, near the main entrance to the churchyard, are the graves of 3 airmen of the Royal Air Force.

GUNNING, Sgt. (Obl.) FRANK VIVIAN, 580613, R.A.F. 15 Sqdn. 12th June, 1940. Age 18. Son of Frank Vivian and Florence Gunning, of Bridport, Dorsetshire.

PÉULEVE, Sgt. (W. Op./Air Gun.) DAVID HENRY, 664230, R.A.F. 15 Sqdn. 12th June, 1940. Age 21. Son of Augustus Albert and Alice Florence Peuleve, of Castle Bromwich, Warwickshire.

TAKEDILL, Pilot Off. (Pilot) ALEXANDER, 42366, R.A.F. 15 Sqdn. 12th June, 1940. Age 20. Son of Gregory John and Grace Maud Takedill.



THE STORY OF FRANK VIVIAN GUNNING - 580613
OBSERVER - R.A.F. 1939 - 1940

FRANK VIVIAN GUNNING, CALLED VIVIAN BECAUSE HIS FATHER WAS ALSO NAMED FRANK, BORN IN BEAMINSTER JULY 13th 1920. THE ONLY CHILD OF FRANK AND FLORRIE GUNNING. EDUCATED AT BRIDPORT GRAMMAR SCHOOL. ON LEAVING SCHOOL HE WORKED IN THE LOCAL ELECTRICITY COMPANY SHOWROOMS AS AN ASSISTANT. BY THE TIME HE ENLISTED FOR SERVICE INTO THE RAFVR, JANUARY 9th 1939 HE HAD GROWN INTO A 6ft TALL, FAIR HAIRED, YOUNG MAN.

Starting at the lowest rank, A.C.2 it was changed to LAC on January 10th being posted to H.Q. Reserve Command then to RTW No 1 Depot Uxbridge where he was kitted out and undertook basic drill training. Followed on April 17th with a move to No.3 Air Observer School Aldergrove. After nearly 2 months in Northern Ireland, during which time he was promoted to Acting Sergeant and obtained his Observer brevet, Vivian was posted to No. 104 (Bomber) Squadron, based at Bassingbourne, Cambridgeshire. Within a few weeks, on July 10th he was posted to No.110 (Bomber) Squadron based at WATTISHAM Suffolk.

Having spent the whole of August preparing for the war, which was so inevitably going to happen, Vivian had no illusions about his future. In a letter written on the 4th of September, the day after war was declared, to his closest school friend John Wilkins, (copy of letter attached to this story) he writes "...we have achieved the seemingly impossible and got messed up in a war, it looks like me for Valhalla!" Explaining his reasons for the comment he continued, "I am not trying to elicit sympathy from you, or exaggerating danger, or anything like that. For once I'm perfectly serious. You see, all we bomber crews are quite aware of the fact and are quite resigned to it..." he continued, "...it's only a matter of weeks before we all get pipped". The young airman's point was made in the conclusion of his letter, when he wrote of the 10 Blenheims which had been despatched for a raid that day "...I have just seen 3 return" exactly one year and 2 days after he had enlisted into the RAFVR, on 11th January 1940, he was posted again. Mainly due to heavy losses he went to West Raynham on No.101 Squadron as did several other survivors. During his period with 101 he was made up to full Sergeant on 3rd March 1940.

Another move came on 3rd of April, this time to RAF Watton on No.21 Squadron, still flying on Blenheim Mk 1V's. Finally on May 27th 1940 he was posted to XV Squadron based at Wyton. 17 days after his arrival on XV Squadron, on June 12th 1940, he was posted as "Missing - presumed killed"

The Squadron was ordered to slow the German advancing forces that were trying to reach the coast and capture Allied troops trying to escape from French ports. Every German column was supported by Anti-aircraft guns. Our slow moving aeroplanes didn't stand a chance.

As an only child, the loss of Vivian Gunning was a devastating blow to his parents, particularly his mother who never recovered from the shock.

The official report stated "580613 Sgt F V Gunning - Observer - RAFVR Age 19 was killed on Wednesday 12th June 1940, whilst flying as Observer on Blenheim Bomber R3747, during an attack against enemy columns at Le Bourget. The aircraft, which was shot down, crashed approximately 3 kms from the coast, near the road, on the eastern side of the D.271 road, south of Malleville-les-Gres. The point of impact being approximately 0.7 kms from the village.

All 3 crew members, Pilot - 42368 P/O A Takideli aged 20

Observer - 580613 Sgt. F V Gunning aged 19

Wireless Operator/Gunner - 614230 Sgt. D. H. Peuleve aged 21

Share a grave, side by side, in the village church yard of Malle-les-Gres. It is maintained by local villagers, overseen by The War Graves Commission.

They are the only War Graves in this Cemetery, Index Ref: No: Fr 662.

(A photograph of the grave is included in this story)

The headstones are engraved as follows:-

P/O A Takideli

"At the going down of then sun and in the morning we will remember them"

Sgt. F V Gunning

"Death may hide but cannot divide"

Sgt. D H Peuleve

"Requiem Aeternam Doha Els, Domine; Et Lux Perpetua Luceat eis"

Having visited the crash site and the churchyard on several occasions I was struck by the peacefulness of the area. The village is 10 kms south-west of St.Valery-en-caux, (some 41 kms west of Dieppe).

It lies 2 kms south of Veulettes, which is a seaside village, 9 kms west of St. Valery-en-caux on the G.C.71ET road running south from Veulettes on the D.271.

During one visit I was fortunate to meet with a lady, who as a school girl saw the wrecked Blenheim, and showed me the field where it crashed. It was just off the D.271 south of the village and to the east of the road. The field is now used for growing peas, the Blenheim had crashed some 100 meters from the road, and in the 1990's one could still see the spot due to lack of growth of the plants. The lady also advised that the 3 crew were originally buried near to the aircraft, she and friends placed flowers there regularly, eventually the bodies were re-buried in the Churchyard where they were tended by local parishioners. The Blenheim remained there for several months until removed for scrap.

The Book "1939 - 1945 THE WAR DEAD OF THE COMMONWEALTH" lists Minor Cemeteries in Seine Maritime issued by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Maidenhead. Extract from Page 24 attached.

This book also has a summary of military action up to Dunkirk and includes the raids on Bruneval, St. Nazaire and Dieppe plus the war in France, all leaving many graves to be cared for, and to be listed in their books for relatives to locate their loved ones.

John Wilkins was a school friend of Vivian, his widow Rosa sent the letter to me in 2001, she told me that John carried the letter with him throughout his wartime service. The original letter is in Bridport Museum Trust files with other information and photographs.

Despite extensive advertising in RAFA and Aircrew Association journals no response about relatives of the Pilot, P/o A Takideli was received. The Ministry advised that in 1940 he had a sister living in London. However the widow of another XV Squadron pilot recalled his name because it was unusual being of Greek origin. A Niece of Sgt. D H Peuleve contacted me, from the Birmingham area, and advised that no other relative was known.